



*History of Philosophy; Eastern  
& Western.*

## INTRODUCTION

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A Persian poet has compared the Universe to an old manuscript of which the first and the last pages have been lost. It is no longer possible to say how the book began, nor do we know how it is likely to end.

MĀ ZI AGEĀZ O ZI ANJĀM-I-JAHĀN BI-KHABAR-IM  
AWWAL-O-ĀKHIR-I- IN KUĤNA KITĀB UFTĀD AST.

Ever since man attained consciousness, he has been trying to discover these lost pages. Philosophy is the name of this quest and its results. A philosopher takes pages to describe philosophy and its nature, but the poet has done so in a single couplet.

The purpose of this quest is to find out the meaning of life and existence. As soon as man attained self-consciousness and began to think, two questions arose in his mind, namely, what is the meaning of his life; and what is the nature of the universe he sees all around. We do not know how long he groped blindly in diverse directions, but a stage came when he adopted a definite course and started to advance along the path of reason and thought. This was the beginning of systematic speculation. The day the human intellect reached that stage marked the birth of philosophy and from that day the history of philosophy begins.

### I.

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY. Till the 18th century, the pattern which European histories of philosophy followed was similar to that adopted by Arab historians and philosophers in the mediæval ages. They did not seek to study the progress of philosophy from a philosophical standpoint but, on the contrary, compiled for the benefit of those who were interested a record of philosophers and their



schools. In truth, they were not histories of philosophy but histories of philosophers. In parenthesis, it may be added that this is how the Arab writers had correctly described such books.<sup>1</sup> It was in the beginning of the 19th century that histories of philosophy, as we know them today, were first written, and ever since the pattern then adopted has generally been followed. Anyone who wants to write on this subject today - whether he intends to write a textbook for students or a book for the general reader - invariably adopts (maybe with minor modifications) the method of discussion followed in such books.

Since then, there have been great advances in the study of the history of philosophy. Scholars of many nations have written important books, but when reading them, one fact has always attracted my notice. I have felt that prevailing accounts of the origin of philosophy and its division into different compartments do not give a full or true picture of the theme. There is therefore need for a more comprehensive account of the general history of philosophy.

Some of the pages of this history have been lost in a manner which makes restoration impossible. The sources of information about them are no longer accessible. ~~To take only one example.~~ It is known to us that Egypt and Iraq had developed a high degree of civilisation long before Greece. We also know that early Greek philosophy was deeply influenced by the ancient wisdom of Egypt. Plato in his writings refers to Egyptian maxims in a way which suggests that their authority as sources of knowledge was unquestioned. Aristotle went further and said that the Egyptian priests were the first philosophers of the world. But



we do not know the details of the relationship between Egypt and Greece. Not only are we ignorant of them, but we have little hope of ever recovering them. Similarly, we have no definite knowledge as to what was the nature and scope of the philosophical speculations that developed in the civilisations of Babylon and Nineveh. Nor do we know whether these speculations were in any way responsible for the birth of Greek philosophy. These lacunae in the history of philosophy are due to gaps in our knowledge which from the nature of the case are not likely to be filled up.

There are <sup>however</sup> certain other regions of ancient history of which we have fuller knowledge today. This enables us to draw a more accurate outline of the growth of philosophy. The increase in our knowledge of ancient Indian history has opened to us a new source of information about ancient philosophical developments. It has thus become possible to trace the rise of philosophy to a period earlier than the Greeks and determine the nature and scope of its development at that stage. We have, however, failed till now to pay adequate attention to these <sup>developments</sup> ~~discoveries~~ and still cling to the limited vision of the history of philosophy which has prevailed since the 19th century.

European philosophy originated in the philosophical enquiries of Greece. Its progress was retarded after the spread of Christianity and there was a stage when philosophy disappeared from the European scene. After a lapse of some centuries, the Arabs began the study of Greek philosophy in the eighth century A.D. and later through their agency, its study was revived in Europe. These studies in course of time led to that movement of enlightenment which is generally



described as the European Renaissance. During this period, Europe secured direct access to the original ~~Latin and~~ Greek texts which till now she had known only through the works of Arab translators and commentators. After the Renaissance began the movement of thought to which we can trace the rise of modern philosophy. The history of philosophy in Europe is thus often divided into four periods : (1) Ancient; (2) Mediaeval; (3) Renaissance and (4) Modern.

Even in the 19th century, European scholars attempted to draw a general outline of the history of philosophy, it was this division into periods which came before them. The impact of Christianity on the European mind was also a factor responsible for such division. European scholars tend to interpret the whole course of human development from the standpoint of the emergence of Christianity. Thus they divide human history into two broad periods, pre-Christian and post-Christian, and subdivide the latter into pre- and post-Reformation. Historians of philosophy, like Erdmann, have sought to designate periods in the development of philosophy on the same basis. Thus, according to Erdmann, the periods of philosophy are (1) The pre-Christian Greek, (2) The post-Christian Mediaeval and (3) the post-Reformation Modern period<sup>2</sup>.

It is evident that this was not an account of the general history of philosophy but only of the history of Western philosophy. Since, however, Indian and Chinese philosophy had not yet fully come to light, this limited picture took the place of a general history of ~~philosophy~~ and, in course of time, came to be accepted as such. All the histories of philosophy written during the 19th century, whether textbooks for students or meant for the general reader, repeat





the same story. This limited view of the history of philosophy has become so ingrained in our minds that we have not been able to cast it out in spite of the new knowledge revealed by later research. Whenever we think of a history of philosophy, it is this limited picture that comes before us. We cannot otherwise explain the manner in which a scholar like Thilly, writing in the second decade of this century, dismisses the contribution of the Orient and starts his account of the development of systematic philosophy with the Greeks.<sup>3</sup>

Such an account of philosophy is incomplete not only in respect of its beginning but also in respect of several later periods. Our view of the progress of philosophy has been so influenced by this Western conception of three or four periods that we are unable to see it in any other perspective. Historically, it is generally recognised that long before the Christian era began, Buddhist metaphysical thought had crystalized into a definite school of philosophy. If we are to study the progress of philosophy in these ages, it is as necessary to attend to these developments in India as to those in Greece. A comparative study of the nature and scope of the philosophical discourses in India and Greece during these centuries would thus have been of great interest. The standard histories of philosophy are, however, so accustomed to consider only European philosophy that they miss all these developments and overlook the contribution of the Orient. ~~It is true~~ ~~that~~ Since the beginning of the 20th century, our knowledge is no longer confined within the four walls of Greece and much of the wealth of Indian and Chinese philosophy has been revealed to us. This knowledge is,



however, even now limited to a circle of specialists and has not found the place it deserves in the general history of philosophy.

Undoubtedly, some recent writers have realised the limitation of the old conception. Attempts are being made to produce in place of the old sectional histories of philosophy a more complete account. Bertrand Russell has recently written a history of philosophy which resembles the nineteenth century histories but he recognises its limitation by calling<sup>n</sup> it A HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY. It cannot, however, be said that the old limited conception of history of philosophy has been fully replaced by a new and more complete account. Nor can we say that Oriental philosophy has secured in the general history of philosophy the position it deserves. The time has now come when with the material we already possess we must attempt to write a comprehensive history in which the contribution of the East and the West will alike receive proper recognition.

It is with a view to provide a first outline of such a comprehensive history that steps were taken to compile the present work. I will consider our labour justified if this endeavour draws the attention of scholars to the need of further studies for the fulfilment of that object.

## II

THE EARLIEST SOURCES OF PHILOSOPHY. A basic question that arises in this connection is that of the beginnings of philosophy. Where should we start the story? In Greece or in India? In other words, which country contains the traces of the earliest developments of philosophy?



So far as Greek philosophy is concerned, we are aware of some of its earliest phases. It has been generally recognised that philosophical speculations in Greece cannot be traced earlier than the 6th century B.C. The first Greek thinker whom we can appropriately describe as a philosopher was Thales. A specific incident has helped us to determine his chronology. It is said that he had predicted through his calculations the correct time of an eclipse which took place in 585 B.C. Two men who after Thales gave a new turn to the development of philosophical thought in Greece were Pythagoras and Socrates. Pythagoras lived about 532 B.C. and the death of Socrates took place in 399 B.C.

When, however, we look at the India of the 6th century B.C., we see a completely different picture. This period in India witnessed not the beginnings but the development of philosophical thought. It was not a case of the dawn of philosophy as in Greece but what may be described as the full glow of philosophical day. It was not the first faltering steps of the human intellect along the long and arduous way of philosophical quest but marked a stage which could have been reached only after a considerable journey.

Two facts are inevitably forced upon our attention in any discussion of this period:

(i) The emergence of Buddhism and Jainism took place in this epoch.

(ii) Before the advent of the Buddha and Mahavira, there had already been a considerable development of philosophical thought in India and systems had emerged which presupposed a long period of wide and deep philosophical speculation.

Gautama Buddha occupies a peculiar place among the greatest men of the world. It is a debatable point whether we should place him in the category of prophets



on of philosophers. In other words, what was the purport of his teaching? Was it a new revelation or was it a new philosophical discovery? In spite of long controversy, both philosophy and religion continue to claim the Buddha. I do not want to renege that controversy but it seems clear to me that it is easier to see him in the role of a philosopher than in that of a prophet. He started on his enquiries in order to solve the problem of life, not to search for the existence of God.

Finally, his quest ended with a solution of that problem and did not concern itself with either the nature or the existence of God. He broke away completely from the religious life of India which believed in innumerable gods and goddesses. He sought and found the consummation of his quest without the intermediation of the concept of God. The principle on which he based his speculative enquiries was itself philosophic. He believed that the goal of human endeavour is to find a solution of the problem of life and this can be done without recourse to *divine machinery*. ~~It can not of course be denied that the Buddhists~~ <sup>It is true that after his death, his</sup> followers soon transformed his teachings into a full-fledged religious cult. When they found that he had left unfilled the place normally assigned to God in religion, they placed the Buddha himself on the vacant throne of the deity. This was however a development for which the Buddha was not responsible.

JAINISM also arose about the same time and was even more indifferent to the existence of God. Like the Buddha Mahavira also sought an answer to the riddle of existence without any reference to the existence of God. The intellectual constructions of the Jainas are based on principles which properly belong to the world of philosophy.





What I am anxious that readers should specially consider is not the personality of Gautama Buddha or Mahavira but the background of thought which made their emergence possible. It is a study of this background which is of the greatest importance to the historian of philosophy. The fact that India in the sixth century B.C. could exhibit the method and approach of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira is in itself evidence that the country had developed a wide-spread and deep philosophical insight. An atmosphere was already in existence in which there could develop different theories and interpretations of the mysteries of life. It is also clear that a stage had been reached where these problems could be solved without presupposing either the existence of God or the revelation of His Will.

Such a philosophic temper did not emerge in Greece till much later. Ionian philosophy which is one of the earliest of the Greek schools believed in a theory of <sup>Souls</sup> ~~spirits~~ informing the planets and other stellar bodies. These can hardly be distinguished from the gods and goddesses of popular mythology. Located on the peak of Mount Olympus, they were the gods of religion; when, however, the same gods put on a philosophic garb and mounted the heavens, they acquired the philosophic title of Intelligences of the Spheres. This tendency of Ionian philosophy continued in all the later schools of Greek thought. If the heavenly <sup>Souls</sup> ~~spirits~~ of Aristotle are subjected to proper scrutiny, it will be seen that they are not very different from the old Hellenic gods. It is true that Socrates protested against the worship of gods but even he was not able to eradicate completely from philosophy the influence of the popular conception of gods.

If after a general survey of the history of philosophy and religion, <sup>elsewhere</sup> we turn to study ~~at~~ the way in



which the Indian intellect reacted to their problems, we find ourselves faced with an entirely new approach. Elsewhere, philosophy and religion pursued distinct and different paths; though their paths had at times crossed and to some had influenced the other, the two had never merged. In India, <sup>on the other hand</sup> ~~however~~, it is not always possible to differentiate between the two. Unlike Greece, philosophy was not confined here to the walls of the academies but became the religion of millions.

The solutions which Gautama Buddha and Mahavira had found for the problems of existence were, as we have already seen, basically philosophical, but their teachings created religious communities in the same way as the preaching of the somatic prophets. Socrates was, in many respects, a unique character among the Greek philosophers. He was essentially a philosopher but to call him only a philosopher does not fully describe his personality. ~~he was something more than a mere~~ ~~ret-physician~~. When we try to think of him, we are inevitably reminded of Jesus Christ. But we know of the event of his life have close affinities with the life of the prophets of Israel and the Yogis of India. He was often in a state of trance. He was believed in an oracle or inner voice which guided him in all moments of crisis. When in his last days he was addressing the court in Athens, he was guided by the behest of his inner voice. Nevertheless, Socrates has been classed among philosophers. His followers did not try to create a religious community based on his personality or his teachings. This fact shows clearly the difference between the Indian and the Greek spirit. In Greece elements of religion acquired the characteristics of philosophy; in India philosophy was itself turned into



religion.

The distinction we have drawn between philosophy and religion cannot, therefore, describe accurately the Indian situation. If we try to apply to India the criterion which distinguishes philosophy from religion, we will either have to change the criterion itself or recognise that in India philosophy and religion have pursued the same path.

We have attempted to form an idea of the intellectual make-up of India of the 6th century B.C. from an analysis of the personality of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira. We should now enquire into the external evidence to justify the conclusions we have drawn from such internal considerations. This is supplied by the second fact to which I have already drawn the reader's attention. All students of Indian philosophy are today agreed that the philosophy of the Upanishads had already begun to develop before the emergence of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira. It is also admitted on all hands that those Upanishads which are recognised to be the oldest were composed about the 7th century B.C. Authorities, however, differ as to the period and order of emergence of the six Indian systems or darshanas. According to some, the Charvaka school had been developed before the time of Gautama Buddha. They quote in evidence certain references in the Upanishads which suggest that a materialistic interpretation of the universe had already taken shape, and this is the essence of Charvaka's thought. Others have expressed similar opinions about the Samkhya and the Yoga systems. They emphasise the fact that Buddhism contains some parallel lines of thought and infer that these two schools must be, if not earlier than, at least contemporaneous with Gautama Buddha.

If the views of these scholars are accepted, the beginnings of Indian philosophy will have to be pushed back  
several centuries



earlier than the 7th century B.C. It is evident that in order to account for such a stage of development in the 7th century B.C., metaphysical speculations must have begun here at least several hundred years ago. In Greece it took almost 300 years to reach from Thales to Aristotle. There would be nothing surprising if in India also it had taken an equal period to develop the systems of Samkhya, Yoga and Charvaka from the first propings of philosophical speculation. It would thus be a plausible inference to hold that the beginnings of Indian philosophy can be traced back to a thousand years before Christ.

Our present state of knowledge does not, however, permit us to go so far back. Indoubtedly, there are indications which lend support to such inference. History cannot however be based on suppositions and inferences and demands tangible evidence for its assertions. The fact is that we do not have such evidence. A safe position would, therefore, be to agree with those modern scholars who hold that the evidence for the development of these schools before the age of Gautama Buddha is not conclusive. All that we can say with assurance is that in the age of the Buddha, the foundations had been laid on which the six systems of philosophy were later built. To deny this would be less than truth but to assert more would be an exaggeration. The verses in the Upanishads which are regarded as evidence of the existence of conflicting schools should be more properly interpreted as anticipations of their positions. They may be regarded as evidence of the fact that different points of view had begun to emerge. It is clear from these hints that some of the thinkers of the day had started to give a materialistic interpretation of the universe. These hints may be regarded as the basis of Charvaka's philosophy





but it does not follow that Charvaka philosophy had already appeared as a fully developed system.

Those scholars who insist that the Samkhya and the Yoga schools developed before the time of the Buddha on the ground that Buddhism and these systems have certain similarities forget that the same evidence can lead to an opposite conclusion. The fact of similarity between them can be equally well used to infer that Buddhism was earlier than Samkhya and Yoga schools and had influenced them.

These discussions thus prove two things:

(a) There had been a considerable development of Upanishad philosophy before the age of Gautama Buddha;

(b) The foundations of some of the other schools had been laid although the evidence does not establish conclusively that they had reached their full development. We may therefore safely say that considerable speculative activity had preceded the emergence of the Buddha.

A study of the history of philosophy therefore leads us to the unassailable conclusion that philosophical speculations began earlier in India than in Greece. Sixth century B.C. marks the beginnings of philosophy in Greece but in India it is an age of considerable philosophical progress. In a general history of philosophy we should therefore begin the story with India, not Greece.

### III

MYSTICISM AND PHILOSOPHY. The earliest Indian philosophy is to be found in the Upanishads and the Upanishads have a distinct mystic and religious strain. From this fact we should not, like Zeller or Erdmann, draw the erroneous conclusion that early Indian philosophy should be excluded from an account of empirical or rational philosophy. It is true that so long as mysticism is the experience of an individual, we cannot apply to it the tests of philosophical enquiry. But when an attempt is made to build up a logical system of speculation on the basis of such experience, it must not only be included within the province of philosophy but may well constitute an important part of it. If we do not apply to it the name of philosophy, there is hardly any other term which can describe it.



What is philosophy? Philosophy is an enquiry into the nature of life and existence. We have two ways of dealing with reality. One starts and ends with revelation and tradition; we call it religion. The second depends on the free exercise of reason and thought and is called philosophy.

Philosophical enquiry from the earliest times has adopted one of two alternate ways of approaching its problems. One is through the world of man's inner being and the other through the world external to him. The characteristic of Indian thought is that it has paid greater attention to the inner world of man than to the outer world. It does not begin with an investigation into phenomenon and reach towards the inner reality. On the contrary, it starts from realisation of the inner world and reaches out to the world of phenomenon. It was this way of approach that revealed itself in the philosophy of the Upanishads. In Greece also, the earlier schools of philosophy had adopted a similar procedure or at least it was not excluded from their general approach. What we know of Orphic or Pythagorean philosophy tends to support this statement. The dialectical method of Socrates was, no doubt, logical but he declared that he was guided by an inner voice. Like Indian philosophy, the message of some Greek philosophers also was 'Know thyself'. In Platonic idealism we find the germs for the future development of mysticism, as well as of the knowledge of the inner self, but his disciple, Aristotle, did not choose to develop either of these lines of thought. Ultimately, however, mysticism came to fruition in Alexandria and culminated in the philosophy of Neo-Platonism.)

We cannot say definitely whether the Upanishad philosophy of India was responsible for the development of this Alexandrian school. We, however, know that



Alexandria had in that era become the meeting place for the religions and civilisations of the East and the West. Just as gods of different religions had met in its market place and led to the foundation of the Serapeum, it seems probable that the different streams of human thought and enquiry met here and mingled in one common flow.

What is the basic principle of mysticism ? It is that the knowledge of reality cannot be obtained through the senses. If we are to reach reality, we must withdraw from the world of sense into that of inner experience. This principle, in some form or other, worked in the philosophical system from Pythagoras to Plato. Plato made a sharp distinction between the world of thought and the world of sense. He expressed their difference by the analogy of the distinction between the light of midday and twilight. According to him, whatever we perceive through the senses is perceived as in twilight. What we perceive through the intellect is seen in the clear light of day. He emphasises, again and again, the distinction between Appearance and Reality. The senses can reach us only upto the world of Appearance but not to the world of Reality. He expresses the ultimate real as the Good. Science, knowledge and truth deal with Ideas which are like the Good but it is only the Good that is ultimately real. We cannot reach the Real through the mediation of sense. The famous parable of the cave-dwellers which he relates in THE REPUBLIC is the final statement of his philosophy. Though he does not speak of intuitive reason on which Upanishad Philosophy is based, the way in which he repudiates objects of



experience given through sense perception brings <sup>him</sup> ~~them~~ very near the attitude of the mystics towards the world of sense.

There is also a second similarity between Indian and Greek philosophy which should not be overlooked. The concept of Nis in Greek philosophy is not very dissimilar to that of 'atman' in Indian philosophy. Plato rejected the views of Anaxagoras and distinguished between two souls. He regards one as immortal and the other as mortal. The mortal soul (irrational soul) is not free from the influence of the body and may be called the ego. The immortal soul is the Idea of the Universe and is free from all influence of the body. This immortal soul is called by him 'Universal Soul'. If therefore we try to contrast Plato's concept of the mortal soul with that of the immortal soul, it will not be very different from the contrast between 'atman' and 'paramatman' in Indian philosophy.

It will not therefore be proper to exclude Upanishad philosophy from a general account of philosophy on the ground that it is mystic. If we do so, we would also have to exclude a major portion of Greek philosophy from any such general account.

We must also remember that what differentiates philosophy from what is non-philosophy is not difference of subject matter but of method and treatment. If a person's conclusions rest upon the authority <sup>of</sup> revelation or on individual ecstasy, we would more properly describe his findings as theology or mysticism and not philosophy. If, however, he adopts a method of intellectual construction and considers that the mystery of existence must be solved on the rational plane, we cannot exclude him from the rank of





philosophers even though religious or mystic beliefs may have influenced him. Actually, some of the most important material of philosophy are derived from such discourses.

In Christianity and Islam, there developed certain schools which sought to subordinate philosophy to religion. But their own discussions have by general consent been included among philosophical writings. The reason for this is that they sought to defend religion against rationalist attacks by the use of rationalist methods. The discourses of St. Augustine and the later Christian scholastics cannot therefore be excluded from philosophical literature. The same remark applies to the writings of the Muslim scholastics. So far as Arab philosophy is concerned, one of the schools of which it can justly be proud will be excluded if we leave out this scholastic literature. Among the Arab philosophers the names of Ibn<sup>n</sup> Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn-al-Rushd (Averroes) are well known but they were not spokesmen of Arab philosophy proper. They were in fact followers and commentators of Aristotle. If we want to enquire into Arab philosophy proper, we must turn our eyes from them and study the writings of the scholastics who were often regarded as the antagonists of Greek philosophy. It is interesting to note that in modern times Bishop Berkely, who embarked on philosophical speculations in order to establish the truth of religion has been always counted among the philosophers and no history of philosophy is complete without an account of his writings.

Her is Zeller's criticism that 'Indian philosophy never lost contact with religion and never became independent' justified.<sup>5</sup> He perhaps had in mind the veneration in which the Vedas were generally held



but he was probably not aware that there were at least three unorthodox schools who repudiated the authority of the Vedas. Neither Buddhism, nor Jainism nor Charvaka philosophy depends on authority or tradition for its findings. Not only so but even among the orthodox schools, Nyaya and Samkhya philosophies often paid only lip service to the authority of the Vedas. We may therefore safely say that Indian philosophy had in the age of the Buddha already established a position independent of religion.

*Philosophical Contacts between*

#### IV

INDIA AND GREECE. There is one other question to which I would like to make a brief reference. If it is an acknowledged fact that philosophy began in India earlier than in Greece, would it be unjustified to suppose that Indian philosophy may have had some influence on the beginnings of Greek philosophy? We know that the civilisations of the Nile and the Euphrates blossomed much before that of Greece. We have also reasons to infer that the influence of these civilisations contributed towards the first development of Greek philosophy. Can we not establish similar relations, whether direct or indirect, between India and Greece?

Historians of the present day have discussed this problem but have not yet reached any valid conclusions. It is true that some of the earliest schools of Greek philosophy exhibit characteristics which have a striking resemblance to Indian modes of thought. Such similarities invite the inference that they were probably due to Indian influence. This applies specially to the Orphic cult. Historians are generally agreed that it exhibits elements that are



essentially non-hellenic in nature and suggest an Asian derivation. The idea of salvation as the liberation of the soul from the body is a central theme in the Orphic cult. Zeller admits that this idea originated in India but nevertheless he held that the Greeks had derived it from Persia.<sup>6</sup> Later research does not, however, indicate that such an idea of liberation of moksha was an essential element in Zarathustra's faith. It would not, therefore, be unreasonable to suppose that this concept travelled from India to Greece and influenced the early Greek schools directly or indirectly.

It was an accepted belief in Greece that a journey to the East was necessary for the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. It is recorded of various philosophers that they travelled to the East in quest of knowledge. We read of Democritus that he spent a long period in Egypt and Persia. Of Pythagoras it is said that when he left his home in Samos, he travelled to Egypt. It is well-known that Solon and Plato had also travelled extensively in the East. It would therefore not be surprising if Pythagoras or some other Greek philosophers of this early period had travelled to India. But there is no historical evidence of such visit. It has, however, been generally recognised that the philosophy of Pythagoras contains elements which are characteristically Indian. The similarity is so marked that if we describe his philosophy without mentioning his name, a student of Indian philosophy could easily mistake it to be the account of an Indian philosopher. How and why this was so remains one of the unsolved problems of the history of philosophy.

We find it stated in the accounts of Alexander that his teacher, Aristotle, had requested him to find



out in the state of knowledge among Indians. This in itself suggests that the renown of Indian wisdom had reached as far as Greece before Alexander's invasion. After the death of Alexander, legends were built round him. They were written in Greek but some were translated into Syrian and later from Syrian into Arabic. They contain accounts of his encounters with Indian philosophers. He enquires from them about philosophical problems and admits that philosophy had reached in India a higher stage than in Greece. These stories cannot be regarded as historical. Nevertheless, they indicate that the renown of Indian wisdom had spread to these areas. This is borne out by the fact that such stories were freely composed and people listened to them with interest and credence. These legends are supposed to have been composed between the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D.

We know that in accordance with his usual practice of setting up Greek colonies in all the lands he conquered, Alexander established such colonies on the banks of the Indus. We further know that the founder of Sceptic philosophy, Pyrrho (d. 275 B.C.) was in the army which came with him to India. After Alexander's death, Selucus Nicator established close contacts with Chandra Gupta Maurya and sent Megasthenes as his ambassador to his court. Relations had thus been established between Indians and Greeks before the age of Asoka. This legend lends support to the theory that intellectual exchanges had also taken place between them. As for Asoka, we know from a still extant inscription that he sent missionaries to the Mediterranean countries and to all the Macedonian kings, though unfortunately no Western account of these





missions has survived.<sup>7</sup>

We may now try to indicate the conclusions which the available evidence justifies. The countries mentioned in the Asokan inscriptions had certainly received the message of Buddhism. It is probable that it had reached still further as Buddhism was in those days a vigorous proselytising religion. It is also probable that the influence of India had reached Greece even before the days of Asoka. We have already referred to the remarkable resemblance between Indian thought and some of the early Greek schools, particularly the philosophy of Pythagoras. Unless we are to assume that these resemblances are entirely fortuitous, there must have been contacts between India and Greece. Such contacts were likely to result in Indian thought influencing Greek thought, as Indian philosophy had already achieved considerable progress and reached a greater degree of maturity than the early schools of Greek philosophy. All these lend support to the theory that Indian philosophy had perhaps contributed to the development of early Greek philosophy though we have no definite knowledge of the nature and extent of such contribution.

What I have written so far deals with the possible influence of Indian philosophy on Greek philosophy. We should now consider the other aspect of the question, namely, what, if any, are the influences of Greek philosophy and science on India. It is difficult to give any detailed account which can be regarded as conclusive. It can, however, be said with confidence that at least in the 4th century A.D. and thereafter Indian astronomy was influenced by Greek astronomy.

In fact, some Greek terms became current in India.

One well-known Indian <sup>astronomer</sup> astronomer, Varahamihira, who died round about 587 A.D. has in his book, BRIHAT SAMHITA referred to Greek astronomers.

Another writer of this period whom Alberuni has quoted in his INDICA has recorded high praise of Greek scholars. We can

certainly infer from all this that after the 3rd century A.D. India had



become familiar with Greek knowledge and its influence was felt among the learned circles here. So far, however, as the different schools of Indian philosophy are concerned, it is difficult to say with confidence to what extent, if any, they were influenced by Greek thought.

To sum up. It seems that our conclusions will be reasonable if we select two periods in the pre- and the post-Christian eras. We may say that in the pre-Christian era, Greek philosophy in its earlier phases was perhaps influenced by Indian philosophy. So far as the post-Christian era is concerned, there are reasons to believe that some aspects of Indian thought were influenced by Greek knowledge.

## V

GREECE and INDIA : I would like to make it clear that my emphasis on the need of a comprehensive history of general philosophy is based solely on historical considerations. There is no question of the exaltation or diminution of any country's or nation's contribution. We have divided humanity into groups based on geographical boundaries and painted Europe, Asia and Africa in different colours in the map of the world. The map of human knowledge cannot, however, be divided into regions of different colours. Knowledge is above all limitations and boundaries. Whatever be the region of the globe where it first emerged, it is the common heritage of all mankind. All human beings, regardless of country or nation, can lay claim to it with equal right. The fact that Socrates was born in Greece and the writers of the Upanishads in India may be important from the point of view of their own biography but is irrelevant so far as the history of human knowledge is concerned. It is true that Socrates was Greek and the writers of the Upanishads were Indians. The addition they have made to human knowledge is however neither Greek nor Indian and belongs to the whole of humanity. If philosophy began in India earlier than in Greece, its only effect is that in narrating the history



of philosophy we should begin with the mention of India. This does not, however, give any special virtue to India nor detract from the glory of Greece. We can apply to human knowledge what the Arab poet has said of the tribe of Banu Amr :

" LA TAQUL DARUHA BI-SHARQI NAJDIN  
KULLU NAJDIN LIL-AMIRIYATI DARU."

Do not say that his house is to the east of Najd.  
For all Najd is the dwelling of the tribe of banu-Amr.

## VI

WORLD PHILOSOPHY                      I have already stated one of the main considerations which led us to undertake the compilation of the present work. There is another consideration which is perhaps of still greater importance. Till now, the fragmentation of philosophy into different compartments has prevented the survey of philosophical problems from a truly universal point of view. We have histories of philosophy which deal with philosophy in one country or period, but there is no single study which covers the philosophical developments of all climes and ages. The time has, therefore, come to write a history of philosophy which will include the contributions of India, China and Greece, and of the ancient, the mediaeval and the modern periods.

Increasing control over the forces of nature has brought men of different regions nearer one another. Different cultures have thus been brought into close proximity. Closer contacts have created conditions in which the contributions of different peoples can be brought into one common pool of human knowledge. They also facilitate the task



of philosophy in effecting a reconciliation between the different principles underlying the outlook of different civilisations. The evolution of a world philosophy has become today a matter not only of theoretical interest but of great practical urgency.

From this viewpoint also, the history of philosophy must be re-written. The contributions of different nations and periods must not only be fully recognised but given their proper place in the evolution of a common world philosophy. For example, in studying the problem of knowledge, we have till now considered the views of either Indian thinkers or Greek epistemologists or Arab philosophers. In consequence, we have looked at philosophical problems not in their pure light but as seen through the glass of a national or geographical outlook. We must now attempt a solution of the problem which will take into consideration the insights acquired by these different systems. In this way alone can we approach the problems of philosophy from a truly philosophical point of view.

The present work, it is true, has not surveyed the problems of philosophy from this synoptic point of view. It has at least sought to bring together in one common compass the knowledge attained by different peoples at different times. It is my hope that this accumulation of material into one common pool will serve as a first step towards the writing of that world history of philosophy which alone can serve the needs of humanity at the present juncture.

## VI

CONCLUSION. We opened this introduction with a quotation from a Persian poet which said that the first





and last pages of the Book of Existence are lost. Philosophy is the quest for the recovery of these lost pages. Some three thousand years have passed in this quest but the lost pages have not been recovered, nor is there any hope ~~today~~ that they will ever be recovered. The history of philosophy is the record of this quest. Though it does not tell us of the attainment of the goal, it has unfolded to us a fascinating story of voyage and enquiry.

The pilgrims of philosophy did not succeed in securing the object of their quest but they have in the course of their journey obtained something else <sup>great</sup> of value: in their search for philosophy they discovered science. Science has brought to man new power but has not given him peace. It first appeared as an instrument of construction, but is now threatening to become a weapon of destruction. The time has now come when philosophy should turn its attention towards the problem of human peace. If it succeeds in this quest and rediscovers the peace which man has lost, then, although it cannot re-write the two lost pages, it will write a new book for humanity. It will then have the

right to say *in the words of another Persian poet*  
 " RAHRAWAN RA KHA TAGI-A-RAH NIST  
 ISHQ HAM RAH AST-U- HAM KHUD-MANZIL AST

Those who follow this path Never tire:

Because it is both the way and the destination.



## NOTES

1. Arab writers had written two distinct types of books. One type was mainly biographical and dealt with the lives of philosophers so that the accounts of their philosophies were only incidental. In the second class of books, the main interest was in the schools of philosophy, and biographical accounts were included only incidentally. The first class of books was called 'Tārikh-ul-Hukāma' or 'Tārikh-ul-Falāsafa' (History of Philosophers). The second class was called Kitāb-ul-Milale-wan nahāl (Books of religious and philosophical sects) or Al Ārā wal Maqālāt (opinions and discourses). There were also books which dealt with particular epochs of philosophy. Thus Al Fārābī (b 925) wrote a book dealing with pre-Aristototelean and post-Aristototelean philosophy. We can perhaps describe these studies as the first attempt to write a systematic history of philosophy.

2. History of Philosophy - J.E. Erdmann (pp.9)

3. History of Philosophy - Frank Thilly (pp.3)

4. J.E. Erdmann - History of Philosophy (pp.13)  
E. Zeller - Outline of the History of Greek Philosophy (pp.2)

5. Outline of the History of Greek Philosophy - E. Zeller (pp.2)

6. Outline of the History of Greek Philosophy - E. Zeller (pp.16)

7. "And this is the chiefest conquest in His Majesty's opinion - the conquest by the Law; this also is that effected by His Majesty both in his own dominions and in all the neighbouring realms as far as six hundred leagues - even to where the Greek king Antiochus dwells, and beyond that Antiochus to where dwell the four kings severally named Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas, and Alexander..... and likewise here, in the king's dominions, among the Yonas" (i.e. the Greeks of the Punjab)." Quoted in Bevan, House of Seleucus - Vol. I (p.298).



CHINESE PHILOSOPHY:

Whatever I have said about the antiquity of Indian philosophy applies with equal force also to Chinese philosophy. We were able to form an idea of the intellectual attainment of India in the 6th century B.C. from a consideration of the teaching and personality of Gautam Buddha and Mahavira who flourished in that age. In like manner, China in the 5th and 6th century B.C. saw the emergence of two great personalities, viz. Kung Fu Tze (mispronounced Confucius by Europeans) and Lao Tze. For Kung Fu Tze the centre of philosophical thought was not the individual but the community. He thus built up a philosophy of life based on the concept of society. Lao Tze turned his thought on the inner resources of man, and laid the foundations of Chinese mystic philosophy. Thus the period which saw the growth of the mystic philosophy of the Upanishads in India also saw the beginnings of Chinese mystic philosophy.

The emergence of Gautam Buddha and Mahavira led us to the conclusion that philosophical speculation in India had reached a high degree of development before the 6th century B.C. From this it followed that the history of philosophy began here earlier than in Greece. In exactly the same way, the emergence of Kung Fu Tze and Lao Tze leads to the conclusion that Chinese philosophy had also attained considerable development before the 6th century B.C. Like India, China should, therefore, also be placed earlier than Greece in a history of philosophy. If in the 19th century Zeller failed to recognise the importance of



Chinese philosophy, it was due to the fact that European scholars did not as yet have full access to the wealth of ancient Chinese literature. No scholar can, however, overlook today the importance of Chinese philosophy. Kung Fu Tze's philosophy of life is in a sense deistic, but it cannot be regarded as based on mystery or revelation. Like the secular culture of China, Chinese philosophy is also fully secular in nature.